

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
AID-05 PC-01 HA-05 DOE-15 SOE-02 IO-13 ACDA-12
/116 W

-----059834 311619Z /43

R 311402Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5150
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 2390

E.O. 11652 N/A
TAGS PINT, AR
SUBJECT VIDELA HERALS NEW ERA FOR NATION

REF: BUENOS AIRES 2300 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: IN A MAJOR ADDRESS, PRESIDENT VIDELA
HERALDED A NEW STAGE IN THE COUNTRY'S PROGRESS
TOWARDS DEMOCRACY. HE CONFIRMED THAT THE JUNTA
WOULD CHANGE THIS YEAR AND THAT THE NEXT PRESIDENT
WOULD BE A RETIRED MILITARY OFFICER. THE PRESS
QUICKLY INTERPRETED THIS AS CONFIRMATION THAT
VIDELA WOULD CONTINUE AS PRESIDENT IN THIS NEXT
STAGE OF THE GOVERNMENT. WHILE HE SAID NOTHING
WHICH HAD NOT BEEN SAID BEFORE, THE SPEECH LENDS
SUPPORT TO REPORTS THAT VIDELA HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL
IN REMOVING SERIOUS OBSTACLES TO BEGINNING THE
PROCESS OF RETURNING TO A DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

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END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT VIDELA'S SPEECH ON MARCH 29, 1978 TO AN ASSEMBLED
GATHERING OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS MARKING THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF
THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT CONTAINED NO SURPRISES AND SAID
LITTLE WHICH HAS NOT BEEN SAID BEFORE. NEVERTHELESS, IT
WAS READ BY VIDELA WITH A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF APLOMB
AND IS BEING BALLYHOODED IN THE LOCAL PRESS AS AN IMPORTANT

MILESTONE ADDRESS IN THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONALIZATION. A LARGE PART OF THE SPEECH WAS GIVEN TO A REVIEW OF THE PAST TWO YEARS OF MILITARY RULE, WITH VIDELA SAYING THAT THE JUNTA HAD PUT THE COUNTRY "BACK ON ITS FEET AND THAT IT IS NOW NECESSARY TO MAKE IT WALK." THE OBJECTIVE, SAID VIDELA, WAS TO BUILD A MODERN COUNTRY BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF "PLURALISTIC DEMOCRACY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND AN INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY."

2. VIDELAS MOST IMPORTANT POINTS IN THE POLITICAL AREA WERE:

A. TERRORISM HAS BEEN REDUCED TO "RESIDUAL EXPRESSIONS."

B. "WITHIN A FEW MORE MONTHS," THE JUNTA WILL BE CHANGED AND THERE WILL BE DESIGNATED AS PRESIDENT "A TOP LEVEL RETIRED MILITARY OFFICER."

C. THE AIM IS TO INSTALL A "STABLE DEMOCRACY" WITH THE "INTERVENTION OF DISTINCT SECTORS AND TENDENCIES AND IN WHICH THE ARMED FORCES WILL BE ASSURED OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION." THE "MOST REPRESENTATIVE FIGURES OF NATIONAL LIFE" WILL BE CALLED UPON TO CONTRIBUTE TO A DIALOGUE AIMED AT DEVELOPING THE POLITICAL PLAN FOR THE FUTURE--WHICH WILL BE THE PRODUCT OF A "CIVIC MILITARY CONVERGENCE."

D. THE MATERIALIZATION OF THE CONVERGENCE WILL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SIGNIFY "THE PROGRESSIVE INCORPORATION OF THE CIVILIANS IN GOVERNMENT."

E. IT IS NOT INTENDED THAT A UNANIMOUS OPINION EMERGE FROM THE DIALOGUE. ONLY THE CORRUPT AND SUBVERSIVES WILL BE EXCLUDED. LEGITIMATE DISSENT WILL BE PERMITTED.

F. POLITICAL PARTIES ARE THE INDISPENSABLE INSTRUMENTS OF A REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY. THE OBJECTIVE IS TO DEVELOP "FEW, VIGOROUS AND PROGRAM ORIENTED CURRENTS OF OPINION, THE RENOVATION OF POLITICAL LEADERS AND THE MODIFICATION OF POLITICAL PARTY PRACTICES."

G. STRENGTHENING MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE MODERNIZATION PROCESS, PASSING TO THE MUNICIPAL JURISDICTION FUNCTIONS WHICH TRADITIONALLY HAVE BEEN CONTROLLED BY THE NATIONAL OR PROVINCIAL LEVELS.

H. A MODERN SOCIETY ENJOYING FULL SOCIAL EQUILIBRIUM IS INCONCEIVABLE WITHOUT TRADE UNION AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ASSOCIATION STRUCTURES.

I. WHILE A NEW ERA IS BEING INITIATED, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REITERATE THAT THE PROCESS WILL NOT BE GUIDED BY AN "ELECTORAL CALENDAR BUT BY THE FULFILLMENT OF OBJECTIVES."

3. WITH REGARD TO THE ECONOMIC POLICY TO BE PURSUED, VIDELA STRESSED THAT A MODERN ARGENTINA HAD TO BE NOT ONLY "AN AGRARIAN POWER" BUT ALSO A "HIGHLY INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRY." THE GOVERNMENT WILL MAINTAIN "A PRUDENT SALARY POLICY" WHICH WILL NOT REVIVE INFLATIONARY EXPECTATIONS, BUT WILL PERMIT AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE SITUATION OF THE LOWEST PAID SECTORS AND ADJUSTMENTS IN THE LEVEL OF BASE (MINIMUM) WAGES. THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT NEGLECT THE SOCIAL WELFARE NEEDS OF THE COUNTRY.

4. IN THE AREA OF FOREIGN POLICY, HE SAID IT IS EVIDENT THAT NO COUNTRY CAN ISOLATE ITSELF "IN AN ERA OF SUPER POWERS, REGIONAL BLOCS AND GROWING AND COMPLEX INTER RELATIONSHIPS." ARGENTINA SHOULD WORK WITH ITS LATIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AMERICAN NEIGHBORS TO STRENGTHEN THE DECISION MAKING POWER OF THE LA AREA IN WORLD AFFAIRS AND DEFEND COMMON INTERESTS AGAINST ANY ATTEMPT AT FOREIGN INTERFERENCE. THANKS TO THE GOVERNMENTS EFFORTS OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, ARGENTINA IS NOW IN A MUCH STRENGTHENED POSITION IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, PARTICULARLY IN TERS OF RELATION SHIPS WITH LA COUNTRIES.

5. WITH REGARD TO THE "DIFFERENCES" WITH CHILE, THE

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AID-05 PC-01 HA-05 DOE-15 SOE-02 IO-13 ACDA-12
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R 311402Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
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GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THE SOLUTION LIES IN DIRECT NEGOTIATION. "WE HAVE TRAVELED AN HONORABLE PATH TO INITIATE A STAGE OF SEEKING UNDERSTANDING AND RECIPROCAL COMPREHENSION. WE HOPE THAT THE RESULT WILL FULFILL THE ASPIRATIONS OF OUR PEOPLES TO LIVE IN PEACE AND TO BUILD A FUTURE OF GRANDEUR."

6. COMMENT: VIDELAS STATEMENT REGARDING THE EXPECTED CHANGES IN THE TOP LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT WAS INTERPRETED BY THE BUENOS AIRES HERALD AS A STATEMENT OF TYPICAL VIDELA MODESTY CLEARLY MEANING THAT VIDELA HIMSELF WOULD STAY ON AS PRESIDENT AFTER GIVING UP COMMAND OF THE ARMY. HIS REFERENCE TO "A FEW MONTHS MORE" APPEARS TO LEND CREDENCE TO REPORTS THAT THE CHANGE OF COMMAND MAY TAKE PLACE AS EARLY AS OCTOBER OF THIS YEAR RATHER THAN WAITING UNTIL THE STAUTORY MANDATE OF THE CURRENT JUNTA FORMALLY ENDS NEXT MARCH. WE NOTE THAT VIDELA WAS CAREFUL NOT TO GIVE ANY TIME FRAME FOR THE PROCESS OF RETURNING THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COUNTRY TO DEMOCRATIC RULE, HOWEVER, NOR DID HE SPECIFICALLY STATE THAT THE NEXT CABINET WOULD INCLUDE A GREATER NUMBER OF CIVILIAN MINISTERS. THESE QUESTIONS HAVE NOT YET BEEN WORKED OUT OR AGREED UPON BY THE THREE ARMED SERVICES, BUT NEVERTHE LESS THE SPEECH LENDS SUPPORT T OTHER REPORTS WE HAVE THAT VIDELA HAS BEEN HAVING SOME SUCCESS IN OVERCOMING OPPOSITION TO HIS POLITICAL PLANS AND PROPOSALS WITHIN THE ARMY AND THE OTHER SERVICES. THERE IS AN INCREASING FEELING IN POLITICAL CIRCLES THAT RIVAL ADMIRAL MASSERA IS ON HIS WAY OUT OF THE NAVY WITHOUT HAVING BEEN ABLE TO ABORT VIDELAS PLANS, THAT VIDELA WILL BE ABLE TO IMPOSE HIS CHOICE FOR ARMY COMMANDER, GENERAL VIOLA, ON THE REST OF THE ARMY AND THAT OBSTACLES IN THE PATHS OF BEGINNING THE PROCESS OF WORKING TOWARDS POLITICAL DEMOCRATIZATION ARE BEING REMOVED.

7. IN THE ECONOMIC AREA WE WOULD NOTE THAT THE SPEECH CONTAINED NO EVIDENCE OF ANY DISPOSITION FOR A CHANGE IN THE BASIC ECONOMIC POLICY THRUST PURSUED BY THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT UNTIL NOW, WHICH SUPPORTS OTHER REPORTS WE HAVE THAT ECONOMY MINISTER MARTINEZ DE HOZS POSITION APPEARS TO BE STABILIZED WITH NO IMMEDIATE THREATS OF HIS REMOVAL IN SIGHT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL MILITARY RELATIONS, SPEECHES, FORM OF GOVERNMENT, REORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BUENOS02390
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780140-0380
Format: TEL
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978035/aaaaadrk.tel
Line Count: 224
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 6163f2c3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BUENOS AIRES 2300
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3276264
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VIDELA HERALS NEW ERA FOR NATION
TAGS: PINT, AR, (VIDELA, JORGE RAFAEL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6163f2c3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014